DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 889 JC 970 473

AUTHOR	Gonzales, Ma. Celeste T.; Pijano, Ma. Concepcion V.
TITLE	Non-formal Education in the Philippines: A Fundamental Step towards Lifelong Learning.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	13p.; In: Lifelong Learning: Policies, Practices, and Programs; see JC 970 458.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Foreign Countries; Integrated Curriculum; Labor Force Development; *Lifelong Learning; *Nonformal Education; Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS	*Philippines

ABSTRACT

In order to significantly contribute to human resource development, the Philippines must develop an integrated educational system of lifelong learning, with a special emphasis on non-formal education. Despite the value that is placed on formal, or sequential academic schooling, it is non-formal schooling that makes accessible the acquisition of skills necessary for employability and competitiveness in the labor market. Several organizations have initiated non-formal education programs to aid the less fortunate sectors of society. Of these, the Education For All movement has made the greatest contribution in the acceptance of institutionalized non-formal education. The strongest proponents of implementation have been private schools, churches, and civic organizations. Primary focuses are on literacy education, livelihood skills, certification and equivalency programs, continuing education among professionals, and schools and university initiatives. Despite significant progress, achievements have not reached full potential due to lack of funding, coordination, and systematic planning amongst the various implementing agencies. Through increased funding, closer coordination, and ongoing communication between officials and leaders in both the public and private sectors, the Philippines might reap the economic benefits of non-formal education and lifelong learning. Contains 11 references. (YKH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 411 889

Non-formal Education in the Philippines: A Fundamental Step Towards Lifelong Learning

Ma. Celeste T. Gonzalez
Ma. Concepcion V. Pijano

In: Lifelong Learning: Policies, Practices, and Programs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. J. Hatton
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

JC970 473

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Non-formal Education in the Philippines: A Fundamental Step Towards Lifelong Learning

by Ma. Celeste T. Gonzales and Ma. Concepcion V. Pijano

The Philippines formally recognized the importance of education in its 1987 Constitution and, perhaps more importantly, made specific reference to non-formal learning, informal learning and a variety of delivery approaches and learning systems. Clearly, this established a base for and support of lifelong learning within the Philippines. However, regardless of how well meaning the intentions may have been, formal support for lifelong learning does not automatically create an integrated, fully developed system for learning opportunities that are available to all citizens everywhere throughout the lifespan. This paper describes the development of elements of what will, hopefully, in time, become an integrated system of lifelong learning. Specific emphasis is placed on non-formal programs of learning, and these are described in some detail. The paper concludes that there is an imbalance between resources currently expended on formal education when compared with the monies spent on and the potential that exists within the non-formal subsystem. Policy makers are encouraged to redress this.

INTRODUCTION

Philippine society has for some time recognized and clearly institutionalized the paramount importance of education for economic and social development. Specifically, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution contains nineteen sections dealing with "Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports". The 1987 Constitution is the first Philippine Constitution containing an entire article on education, advocating the rights of all Filipino citizens to quality education at all levels and making education accessible to all (Villacorta, 1987, p. 50).

Current leaders in education, government, religion, business, non-governmental organizations, and professional associations also posit a lifelong learning orientation. They believe it is important to educate Filipinos not only for academic gains, but also to support economic competitiveness, cross-cultural understanding, social transformation and the development of a national identity. All of this will then bolster the platform from which the Philippines reaches out to the rest of the world, especially the Asia-Pacific Rim community.

According to Cross (1981), lifelong learning is based on the notion that education is a continuing activity taking place throughout the lifespan for everyone who lives with the accelerating pace of change. It involves learning by people of all ages and

from all walks of life using the multiple learning resources of society in order to learn whatever they need or want to learn. Three basic concepts about the nature of lifelong learning are implied. First, people should be encouraged to become self-directed learners and active agents of their own education. Second, there are alternative educational sources besides schools and colleges that serve the educational needs of people. Third, these learning resources and experiences are available to all, anytime, and on a full-time or part-time basis. Lifelong learning also "establishes that self-improvement and enrichment are goals that are equally as important as the need to update professional and vocational skills" (Candy & Crebert, 1991, p. 7).

THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Philippine educational system is composed of two major subsystems, the formal and the non-formal. The formal subsystem consists of sequential academic schooling at several levels. Included are six years of elementary education, four years of secondary education, and a variety of post-secondary programs. The post-secondary levels include one to three years of technical/vocational education or a minimum of four years of tertiary education. The completion of each level is a prerequisite for entry into the next. The formal education subsystem provides students with basic skills of numeracy and functional literacy and grants certifications of proficiency in different academic disciplines. As is the case in most formal subsystems, the three levels of schooling focus for the most part on academic training and scholastic competence.

Non-formal education may be described as any organized and systematic learning conducted largely outside the formal educational subsystem that may or may not provide certification. Definitions aside, the characteristics of non-formal education make it quite different from the formal subsystem in a number of ways. First, non-formal education addresses the needs of those who were not able to participate in the formal subsystem. In this regard, the clientele are quite different. A substantial number dropped out of the formal subsystem, the reasons for this being numerous though mostly centred on poverty. The organization, specific activities and delivery methods associated with non-formal education are designed to meet the express needs of the distinct clientele (see Congressional Commission on Education, 1993). At present, non-formal education in the Philippines has four thrusts:

- family life skills, including health, nutrition, childcare, household management, and family planning;
- vocational skills;
- functional literacy;
- livelihood skills.

Non-formal education is provided separately and apart from the formal school subsystem and does not serve as an entry point to a higher level of formal education. In this regard the two subsystems are separate, and little room for movement

between the two is currently available. Non-formal education concentrates on the acquisition of skills necessary for employability and competitiveness in the labour market. The availability of non-formal education expands educational access to more citizens representing a variety of demographic characteristics, socioeconomic origins, and general interests (Department of Education, Culture and Sports, 1994). In effect, the non-formal subsystem makes education available to a very large number of Filipinos who would otherwise not have an opportunity to participate in any educational opportunities.

Given this brief description of the formal and non-formal subsystems of education in the Philippines, it is apparent that a subsystem of lifelong learning would lean heavily on both. Candy and Crebert describe lifelong learning as an overarching umbrella, perhaps best characterised as a context rather than a program or programs, from whose central hub radiates a variety of spokes each of which, perhaps, represents an educational opportunity. To take the metaphor further, in the Filipino context, the formal and non-formal education subsystems, as defined and described here, are major spokes, from which a whole series of other spokes arise. (It is important to note that neither reflect the very significant and important "informal" component of lifelong learning.)

Most interesting and germane to this paper is the fact that "schooling" in the Philippines has been equated almost entirely to the formal subsystem rather than the non-formal, in spite of the size and importance of the latter. The structured period of formal schooling, which involves preparation for adult life and which ends when one receives a diploma, is the primary concern of legislators and educators. The formal diploma, for its part, is the passport to economic and social mobility and, as a result, emphasis and support in terms of resources, policies and programs have always been given to the formal education subsystem notwithstanding recent efforts to promote the visibility and advantages of the non-formal subsystem (Centre for Research and Communications, 1986).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

A review of the development of the educational system in the Philippines from the early 1970s onwards reveals that there have been significant efforts directed towards the development and institutionalization of non-formal education. With the advent of the report by Faure et al. (1972), commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the non-formal subsystem was accorded more importance and was seen to be a viable alternative to the formal subsystem.

In 1977, the government institutionalized non-formal education through the creation of the Office of the Undersecretary of Non-formal Education under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. This was accomplished through Presidential Decree 1139. The office of the Undersecretary for Non-Formal Education was given responsibility to serve as the coordinating arm for integrating all programs of various government and non-government entities involved in non-formal education in the Philippines. At this time, almost all government agencies participated in the design and delivery of a variety of nationwide training pro-

grams, the goal being to upgrade the Filipino human resource base through literacy programming, industry training and upgrading, and value enhancement for development.

In 1979, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including schools, church organizations, civic groups, and foundations, initiated various non-formal education programs in response to the government's call to help the less fortunate sectors of society. At this time one group of private institutions banded together to form what became the Private Institutions and Schools National Association in Non-Formal Education (PRISNANFE). This organization integrated under one office the efforts of a conglomeration of private schools undertaking non-formal education projects.

In the same year, the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) encouraged its member schools to initiate and implement non-formal education programs and projects. Service to the community was included in the criteria for accreditation. An accredited institution was expected to become directly involved in non-formal education and to offer programs "beyond its walls".

In the mid-80's, the Association for Non-Traditional Education in the Philippines (ANTEP) was established through the generosity of the Canadian government and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC). Two national organizations, the Catholic Educational Association (CEAP) and the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges (ASC), spearheaded the development of ANTEP.

Later, the Education for All (EFA) movement of UNESCO gave the non-formal education subsystem its greatest boost. It served as a powerful impetus and support for those engaged in non-formal education to meet the basic literacy needs of all children, youth and adults. By acknowledging that the formal subsystem was not able to meet the broad learning requirements of individuals and communities, a variety of educational projects and delivery systems was necessary. EFA stressed the importance of various non-formal learning approaches and methodologies to supplement, complement and enrich formal education. Following the work of EFA it can be said that acceptance, if not support, for non-formal education was institutionalized within the Philippines.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The importance of non-formal education, as well as informal and indigenous education, was further elevated by recognizing and supporting it in Article XIV, Section 2 (4) of the 1987 Constitution:

> *The State shall encourage non-formal, informal and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs, and provide adult citizens, the disabled, out-of-school youth with learning in civics, vocational efficiency and other skills.*

The non-formal education programs in the country focus on the following thrusts:

- the promotion of literacy programs for the attainment of basic skills that include numeracy and functional literacy and which are basic needs for every individual;
- the development of livelihood skills which manifest in the individual specific competencies that prepare, improve, and enhance employability and economic productivity;
- the expansion of certification and equivalency programs, which are administered by the formal education subsystem, into the non-formal sector.

As described earlier, non-formal educational programs are conducted by both public and private sector organizations. Within the government, the primary agency is the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), and more specifically the Bureau of Non-Formal Education. Almost all government agencies, including the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, National Defense, and Social Welfare and Development, as well as the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC), have developed and integrated non-formal education into their activities.

In 1994, the Philippine educational system was restructured. Two government entities were created: the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The CHED is responsible for both public and private institutions of higher education as well as degree-granting programs in all post-secondary educational institutions. TESDA, on the other hand, was created by merging the NMYC and the Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education. Both CHED and TESDA support and relate to a variety of non-formal educational programs.

Regardless of government support and involvement, the strongest proponents and most active implementors of non-formal education in the Philippines have been and continue to be the private schools, churches, civic organizations and foundations (Congressional Commission on Education, 1993). Their activities range from basic level skills training through to values formation. The delivery systems for many of these activities include seminars and workshops, community assemblies, television and radio broadcast programming, correspondence courses, home visits, self-directed learning modules, and practical work. The curricula designs of the various programs vary from agency to agency and are tailored to the specific needs of the clientele. Variety is the key.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

A multiplicity of specific non-formal education initiatives can be grouped within five major sectors. Although non-formal in nature, some have links to the formal education sector.

Literacy Education

Literacy education is spearheaded by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) with its functional literacy program that includes the teaching of reading, writing

and arithmetic. Literacy classes are organized by DECS for out-of-school youth and adults in all of the 14 regions of the country. Other BNFE programs include the Magbassa Kita Project and the Female Functional Literacy Program assisted by UNICEF. The Magbassa Kita Project uses the phonosyllabic method for teaching reading. This approach shortens the learning time for basic literacy to just three months. The project has benefitted more than a hundred thousand out-of-school youth and adults in 13 regions of the country. The Female Functional Literacy Program focuses on the seven provinces in the Visayas and Mindanao where illiteracy rates among women are highest.

Livelihood Skills

The Livelihood Skills Development Program of DECS is designed to equip the unemployed and underemployed with vocational and technical skills through short term training programs. Examples of courses offered include dressmaking, electronics, cosmetology, bookkeeping and cooking.

Also involved in skills training is NMYC. It targets clientele in the out-of-school youth group, as well as, like DECS, the unemployed and underemployed. The three key NMYC skills training program groups are Industrial Training, Rural Training and Special Programs. In 1990, 133,473 trainees graduated from these three programs (Congressional Commission on Education, 1993, p. 130).

In skills training, the Dual Training System is used where students receive a combination of in-school and in-workplace programming. For four days per week the trainees receive practical exposure and specialized training in a firm, coupled with theoretical instruction twice a week. This program relies on strong cooperation between schools, industry and government.

Another livelihood skills project of the BNFE, in collaboration with SEAMEO-INNOTECH (South East Asian Ministers of Education - Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology), is the Development of a Learning System for the Improvement of Life (DELSILIFE). This is a community-based education intervention program that seeks to improve the quality of life and develop skills needed locally within the community. Programs are offered in nutrition, literacy and handicrafts.

Certification and Equivalency Programs

Equivalency programs enable students to enter or re-enter the formal school subsystem using a certification system that accredits learning from outside the formal subsystem. As well as supporting re-entry into the formal school subsystem, equivalency programs accredit skills and job experiences for employment purposes.

One of the best known certification and equivalency programs within the Philippines is the Accreditation Equivalency Program (AEP) of DECS. School drop-outs completing this program re-enter the formal school subsystem or gain work in a company through the accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired via a variety of non-formal avenues. This program is based in part on the Philippines Educational Placement Test (PEPT) which is used to assess student proficiencies.

The Continuing Learning Delivery System is one of BNFE's Distance Education

programs. It is geared towards developing competencies associated with secondary school curriculum, and evaluating and certifying students as graduates of the secondary level. Subjects are completed in modules and students work independently. Upon completion of the modules, students sit for a comprehensive examination. The BNFE is currently developing a non-formal Alternative Learning System. Classified as an alternative equivalency program, it is designed to run parallel with and be comparable to the formal school subsystem.

With the issuance of Executive Order No. 330 on July 30th, 1996, the newly created Commission on Higher Education has been given a mandate to expand and strengthen tertiary education equivalency and accreditation programs. This is clear recognition that education and the acquisition of expertise and skills are processes that take place within the work environment and that credit should be given for this.

Continuing Education Among Professionals

Recently, there has been increased emphasis and concern related to the need for degree holders to regularly acquire new skills and take part in professional updating programs. It is the Philippines Professional Regulations Commission which formally encourages professionals to keep abreast of developments in their professions. Recently, this has been entrenched by the requirement that all practising professionals must show proof of compliance with new requirements for continuing professional education before they are allowed to renew their licenses (Rosas, 1996, p. 3).

School and University Initiatives

In 1995 the University of the Philippines (UP) established the UP Open University (UPOU), an institutional arm which embodies the philosophy of open learning. Unlike the United Kingdom Open University, the UPOU operates within the system of a conventional university and remains linked to the academic programs of the UP. UPOU reaches out, through the distance and open learning modes to people who are not able to participate in classroom style education. As more programs are offered, the UPOU will be tapping a variety of cooperative agencies nationwide to act as on-site support and learning centres. The UPOU could be the "biggest" campus because it will offer courses throughout the entire country (Doyo, 1995). Distance and open education are gaining acceptance and being promoted within the Philippines.

Accredited institutions which account for 15% of the total number of schools in the country have established a variety of non-formal educational and learning programs and projects that respond to the specific and immediate needs of the communities they serve (Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines, 1996). These programs focus on a multiplicity of curriculum areas using an assortment of delivery approaches. Included are livelihood skills training, vocational and technical training, course delivery through night programs at high schools for adult learners, instruction in family life skills for men and women, and courses and programs in values formation. These programs and the associated extension services seek to

empower learners and improve the quality of life for the individuals and their families. Faculty members from the institutions often act in an advisory capacity for the programs, alongside students and graduates. At the same time, these institutions often support the wider community by making their physical resources available for non-formal education, and they establish ongoing links with non-formal education graduates in order to provide them with upgrading and retraining initiatives. In various ways, therefore, the broader programming associated with non-formal education directly provides and supports greater service to the community.

CONCLUSION

Despite significant progress in the development and delivery of non-formal educational opportunities within the last two decades, there continues to be a shortfall in terms of what has been achieved versus the full potential to enrich the overall system of education. Although the government formally supports non-formal education, and has specifically referred to its importance and value in the constitution, funds for non-formal educational programs continue to be inadequate. DECS-BNFE has openly lamented the disparity between funds allocated to formal and non-formal education (Congressional Commission on Education, 1993). It has been estimated that less than 8% of the intended clientele for non-formal education was accessed in 1990, while the formal education subsystem succeeded in reaching 57% percent of its target clientele. This situation is due largely to the very small budget appropriated for non-formal training in terms of the client size. Lack of funding and other resources hampers the delivery of non-formal education services in the Philippines, and will likely continue to do so into the future. This lack of support or imbalance in funding can be attributed in part to the strong and long-entrenched interests within the formal subsystem, coupled with the relative newness of the non-formal subsystem. Policy makers and politicians need to be encouraged to assess the relative potential of the two subsystems, the formal and the non-formal, and direct funding in such a way as to benefit the largest numbers of learners. In turn, this will have the greatest economic effect and benefits for the Philippines as a whole.

Another problem which has been encountered in the delivery of non-formal education is the lack of coordination and systematic planning amongst the various implementing agencies. Each organization has specific target clientele and activities, but there remains considerable overlap. As a result, there is a continuing need to consciously evaluate the functions and resources of all the deliverers involved with non-formal education in order to minimize overlap and maximize the use of scarce resources. Closer coordination and ongoing communication between officials and leaders in both the public and private sectors, as well as government and NGOs, are required. Systematic linkages are the key to avoiding duplication. This issue assumes greater significance in the context of the restructuring of the educational system and the creation of both the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. There is a need to clarify the roles of each of these agencies in terms of the delivery of non-formal educational services in the country.

It is important to acknowledge that many initiatives related to non-formal education have been implemented within the Philippines during the past few years. However, there remains a need for the educational system broadly, and especially institutions of higher education, to redirect programs and services in an effort to balance these with the larger society's need for lifelong learning opportunities. Higher education institutions need to assume a far greater role in promoting the goals of lifelong learning. Universities and colleges should take the lead by introducing a full range of innovative programming and other academic services. Curricula should embrace and reflect technological, economic, social and cultural issues, and non-traditional delivery methods should be part of every institution's repertoire. In a rapidly changing world, colleges and universities need to cater to the demands of a more diversified clientele and respond to the growing needs of the labour market.

The movement towards non-formal distance education is a timely one. Distance education has the potential to contribute significantly to human resource development by widening access to higher education and reducing costs for students, industry and the government. In the Philippines, a country with more than 7,000 islands, distance education will open windows of opportunity, break down barriers of time and space, and unleash the full potential for non-formal education as a viable alternative to the formal subsystem. This is the opportunity that faces the Philippines as it stands at the threshold of the third millennium, and policy makers need to focus directly and with deliberate reflection on the opportunities presented.

REFERENCES

Candy, P. & Crebert, R.G. (1991). Lifelong learning: An enduring mandate for higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development 10*(1), 3-15.

Centre for Research and Communications. (1986). *The Philippines at the crossroads: Some visions for the nation*. Manila: Author.

Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM). (1993). *Education and manpower development programs: Vol. 1. Areas of concern in Philippine education, Book one. Making education work*. Quezon City, Philippines: Congressional Oversight Committee on Education.

Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines - 1987. (1987). Manila: Rex Book Store.

Cross, P. (1981). *Adults as learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Department of Education, Culture and Sports. (1994). *Education 2000: The first two years*. Manila: Author.

Doyo, C. P. (1995, July 2). UP's Open University. *The Sunday Inquirer, 10*(18), 7-8.

Faure, E., Herrera, F., Kaddoura, A., Lopes, H., Petrovosky, A., Rahnema, M., & Ward, F. (1972). *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*. Paris: UNESCO.

Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines. (1996). *FAAP Directory*. Manila: Philippines.

Rosas, N. L. (1996, October). *Professional regulation of continuing education*. Paper presented at the First National Congress on Continuing Education, Manila, Philippines.

Villacorta, W. V. (1987). Education and the new constitution. In R. J. Bonoan (Ed.), *Higher education for national reconstruction* (pp. 44-52). Manila: National Book Store.